



Germany: Facts & Figures May 2006

A monthly overview of current opinion data and statistical information in the Federal Republic of Germany

Politics

If Bundestag elections were held on June 4, the CDU/CSU would receive 34% of the vote, the SPD 28%, the Green Party 9%, the FDP 13%, the PDS (with WASG) 10%, and all other parties combined 6%. (forsa. 05/31/06)

Only 34% of Germans still think that the formation of a grand coalition was the right decision, 61% said this was "explicitly wrong." 75% reject the government's economic policy course. Only 18% think that the Merkel government gives trade and industry the right impulses. 36% believe Angela Merkel will be a strong chancellor (down from 42% at the beginning of her term) and 47% consider her a weak chancellor. (Welt am Sonntag, 05/31/06)

In the local elections in Thuringia, the CDU received 41.4% of the votes (-5.5%), the SPD 25.7% (-2.6%) and the Left Party 17.8% (up 5.5%). Independent candidates increased their share from 9.2% to 12.5%. The FDP dropped to 1.3% (-0.4%) and the Green Party gained 0.1% for a total of 1.2%. (Major papers, 05/09/06)

Economy

The unemployment rate decreased to 10.8% in May (11.5% in April), with 4.53 million unemployed. This is the sharpest decline within a month since German unification. (Labor Exchange, 05/31/06)

The ifo-index business confidence slipped slightly to 105.6 points (105.9 in April) after five consecutive months of increases. But the figure was still better than economists' expectations of a fall to 105.0. (ifo. Major papers, 05/26/06)

According to the latest tax estimate, Länder and local governments can expect up to 8.1 billion euros more in tax revenue in 2006 compared to the estimates presented in November of last year. (Major papers, 05/12/06)

Gross Domestic Product rose 0.4% in the first quarter of 2006 after zero growth in the last quarter of 2005. (Federal Statistical Office. Major papers, 05/12/06)

The Cabinet approved a bill that will increase income tax for top earners and aims to cut back tax breaks, effective January 1, 2007. The top income tax will increase to 45% (up from 42%) for those with a taxable yearly income of more than 250,000 euros. There will be cuts in tax breaks for commuters and cuts in the tax-free threshold on interest earned on savings. The government expects the change to result in additional revenue amounting to 127 million euros. (Major papers, 05/11/06)

The EU Commission predicts a German budget deficit of 3.1% this year and of 2.5% for 2007. In 2007, for the first time in six years, Germany will not exceed the 3% debt limit laid down in the Maastricht Treaty. (Major papers, 05/09/06)

Society

In 2005, a total of 26,401 politically motivated crimes were registered (2004: 21,178). The number includes 2,448 politically motivated violent crimes (up from 1,800 in 2004) and 14,737 so-called "propaganda infringements," e.g. use of forbidden symbols such as swastikas (up from 11,860 in 2004). Of the 26,401 crimes, 16,000 were committed by right-wing activists, 4,900 by left-wing activists and 800 by foreigners. The number of right-wing extremists rose by 400 to 10,400. (Annual report by Office for the Protection of the Constitution. Major papers, 05/23/06)

Overall, 63 Bundeswehr soldiers have been killed in international missions, 55 of them in the past eight years. 39 were killed by hostile action, while 24 were killed in accidents or committed suicide. In addition, 6 police officers were killed during advisory missions abroad. 9,067 soldiers have been injured during international missions since 2002, mostly in accidents. (Major papers, 05/23/06)

56% of Germans are of the opinion that a clash of cultures is currently happening between Christianity and Islam, up from 46% in late summer of 2004. 25% do not hold this opinion, 19% were undecided. 58% fear that this clash will result in rising tensions between cultures in Germany, 22% do not fear this and 20% were undecided. (Allensbach. FAZ, 05/17/06)

82% of Germans said they advocate profound reforms, and 65% said they are willing to make sacrifices to support such reforms. Of greatest concern are reforms of the labor market, but only 19% said they believe the government is able to make the labor market fit for the future by the end of this term. (Emnid. FAZ, 05/11/06).

The governing coalition agreed to introduce benefits for parental leave. Either parent will be able to take leave for up to a total of one year and receive 67% of the last wage, up to 1,800 euros a month. If both partners decide to take leave successively, the period will extend to 14 months. (Major papers, 05/03/06)

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